

Christina N. Goodrich (SBN 261722)
christina.goodrich@klgates.com
Cassidy T. Young (SBN 342891)
cassidy.young@klgates.com
K&L GATES LLP
10100 Santa Monica Boulevard
Eighth Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90067
Telephone: +1 310 552 5000
Facsimile: +1 310 552 5001

(additional counsel listed
on signature page)

*Attorneys for Plaintiff
Entropic Communications, LLC*

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

ENTROPIC COMMUNICATIONS, LLC,

Plaintiff,

v.

DISH NETWORK CORPORATION, *et al.*,

Defendants.

ENTROPIC COMMUNICATIONS, LLC,

Plaintiff,

v.

COX COMMUNICATIONS, INC., *et al.*,

Defendants.

Case No.: 2:23-cv-01043-JWH-KES
(Lead Case)

Case No.: 2:23-cv-01047-JWH-KES
(Related Case)

Case No.: 2:23-cv-01048-JWH-KES
(Related Case)

Case No.: 2:23-cv-05253-JWH-KES
(Related Case)

[Assigned to the Honorable John W.
Holcomb]

**ENTROPIC COMMUNICATIONS,
LLC'S RESPONSE TO COMCAST
DEFENDANTS' OBJECTION TO
REFERRAL TO SPECIAL
MASTER**

**ENTROPIC'S RESPONSE TO COMCAST DEFENDANTS' OBJECTION TO
REFERRAL TO SPECIAL MASTER**

1 ENTROPIC COMMUNICATIONS, LLC,

2 Plaintiff,

3 v.

4 COMCAST CORPORATION, *et al.*,

5 Defendants.

6 ENTROPIC COMMUNICATIONS, LLC,

7 Plaintiff,

8 v.

9 DIRECTV, LLC, *et al.*,

10 Defendants.

1 I. INTRODUCTION

2 This Court possesses the authority to refer “any disputes related to discovery ...
3 and any other matters” to the Special Master. That authority derives not just from Rule
4 53, but the parties’ express agreement. *See* 1048 DE 100. Comcast now objects to this
5 Court’s exercise of that authority—not because it is improper but because, in Comcast’s
6 estimation, there is a risk of “delay, confusion, and unnecessary effort and expense.”
7 1043 DE 293 at 2:8–11. The opposite is true—Comcast’s Objection serves no purpose
8 but delay. This Court already weighed the efficiencies in making this referral and
9 reached the correct conclusion: referral expedites resolution of this dispute by
10 permitting the Special Master to address the underlying Motion to Supplement and
11 Comcast’s various arguments in opposition, leaving only the ultimate issue—the
12 sufficiency of Entropic’s willfulness allegations—for the Court to resolve. The Court
13 should overrule Comcast’s Objection.

14 II. FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY

15 Following the Court’s Order to Show Cause regarding appointment of a special
16 master and the subsequent hearing and Orders, on June 8, 2023, Entropic and Comcast
17 submitted a proposed order appointing Mr. Keyzer as the special master. 1048 DE 78.
18 As relevant to Comcast’s Objection, the parties jointly proposed an order outlining Mr.
19 Keyzer’s “Scope of Authority” as “authority to preside over . . . any disputes related to
20 discovery . . . and ***any other matters referred to the Special Master by the Court.***” 1048
21 DE 78-2 § 2(a-b) (emphasis added). The Court entered this order on July 5, 2023,
22 confirming Mr. Keyzer’s authority over matters referred to him by the Court. 1048 DE
23 100.

24 Mr. Keyzer has already resolved numerous disputes between the parties across
25 this case and other related cases involving the same or similar patents. *See, e.g.*, 1043
26 DE 292. Further, Mr. Keyzer incidentally already has technical familiarity with six of
27 the Patents-in-Suit in the consolidated Cable cases, having previously served as
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1 Technical Advisor to Judge Gilstrap during the *Markman* process in *Entropic*
 2 *Commc'ns, LLC v. Charter Commc'ns, Inc.* prior to his appointment in this case. No.
 3 2:22-cv-00125-JRG, DE 118 (E.D. Tex. June 13, 2023).

4 **III. RESPONSE TO OBJECTION**

5 The Court did not improperly exercise its discretion in referring the present
 6 matter to the Special Master. The Court has already correctly concluded Entropic's
 7 Motion to Supplement should be addressed before Comcast's Motion to Dismiss
 8 because it determines the content of the operative complaint that Comcast seeks to
 9 dismiss. Special Master Keyzer undoubtedly has the authority to provide the Court with
 10 a Report and Recommendation ("R&R"), which will be helpful to the Court in its
 11 decisions.

12 Comcast is strangely resistant to this process. Comcast dresses up its objections
 13 as matters of "efficiency and propriety" in an effort to prioritize a ruling on its own
 14 Motion to Dismiss and delay resolution of these matters altogether. *See* 1043 DE 293
 15 at 6. Comcast is prematurely objecting to an R&R that has not even been issued, which
 16 needlessly complicates and delays—though that seems to be by design.¹

17 Apparently trusting neither the Special Master nor this Court's supervision of
 18 whatever R&R is produced, Comcast argues the Court has no authority to even ask for
 19 one. 1043 DE 293 at 4–6. This is false. Comcast expressly agreed (and the Court
 20 ordered) that Special Master Keyzer has authority to preside over not only "discovery
 21 disputes," but also "any other matters referred to the Special Master by the Court." 1048
 22 DE 78-2 § 2(a-b); 1048 DE 100 § 2(a-b). This broad authority is not a mistake—it
 23 allows the Court to utilize the Special Master as desired to assist with a complex and
 24 resource-consuming set of litigations. Comcast cites a case, but it is inapposite to the
 25 situation here. In *Castenada v. Burger King Corp.*, the Ninth Circuit declined to order

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 27 ¹ The order appointing Special Master Keyzer specifically sets forth a procedure for
 28 review of the Special Master's orders after objections by a party. 1048 DE 100 § 8.
 Comcast is free to avail itself of this procedure after the Special Master issues an R&R.

1 the district court to appoint a special master, an appointment *objected to* by the
 2 defendant, in a class action, to “determine both issues of defendant’s liability and the
 3 extent of injunctive relief, not to mention statutory damages to class members.” 264
 4 F.R.D. 557, 570 (9th Cir. 2009). Here, the parties consented to a broad scope of
 5 authority for the Special Master.

6 Running from its prior consent, Comcast now argues that this Court’s referral of
 7 the Motion to Supplement is improper because the Special Master was not appointed to
 8 resolve “dispositive legal motions, such as motions to dismiss.” 1043 DE 293 at 5. But
 9 the Special Master’s appointment speaks for itself, covering “any other matters referred
 10 to the Special Master by the Court.” 1048 DE 100 § 2(a-b). Nor does *Castenada* stand
 11 for the proposition that the District Court is forbidden from referring to the Special
 12 Master matters that might impact particular issues. *See generally*, 264 F.R.D. 577. The
 13 Court remains singularly in charge of making any dispositive findings as paragraph 8
 14 of the Court’s appointment provides a procedure for “Review of Special Master’s
 15 Orders.” 1048 DE 100.

16 Comcast’s insistence that this Court cannot trust itself to adequately review, and
 17 then either accept or reject, certain categories of the Special Master’s R&Rs is
 18 unsupportable. Courts regularly appoint special masters to hear dispositive motions,
 19 with and without the parties’ consent. *See, e.g., Diamond Resorts U.S. Collection Dev.,*
 20 *LLC v. Pandora Marketing*, 656 F. Supp. 1073, 1079–81 (C.D. Cal. 2023) (court
 21 appointed special master to hear summary judgment motions); *Thakur v. Cofiroute*
 22 *USA, LLC*, 2021 WL 304389, at *1 (C.D. Cal. Jan. 29, 2021) (court appointed special
 23 master to issue R&R on motion to dismiss, which the Court adopted in its entirety).
 24 Specifically, the *Thakur* Court adopted a special master’s R&R granting the defendant’s
 25 motion to dismiss without leave to amend, the exact “dispositive legal motion” Comcast
 26 contends, without support, is outside of the authority of a special master. *See Thakur*,
 27 2021 WL 304389, at *1. Thus, the Special Master can not only issue an R&R “on
 28

whether Entropic’s post-suit allegations are futile,” but could issue an R&R on Comcast’s Motion to Dismiss if the Court were inclined to refer it.² 1043 DE 293 at 6.

In summary, the Court has full authority to refer to the Special Master any dispute it sees fit—i.e., “any other matters referred to the Special Master by the Court.” 1048 DE 100 § 2(b). Comcast cannot selectively take back its consent. To the extent Comcast’s objection is simply an argument that the Court *should not* refer the Motion to Supplement because it might overlap or interplay with the Court’s decision on Comcast’s Motion to Dismiss, there are two simple responses. First, the Court has the authority to disagree with Comcast, and has done so. Second, if the purported overlap is troublesome, the Court can refer both motions to the Special Master to allow any R&R to grapple with whatever overlap or interaction may exist. Entropic requests that the Court move ahead with whatever method most expeditiously addresses the issues in the case that does not include entertaining pre-objections to a Special Master R&R that has not even issued.

Dated: February 1, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

By: /s/ Christina Goodrich

Christina Goodrich (SBN 261722)
christina.goodrich@klgates.com
Cassidy T. Young (SBN 342891)
cassidy.young@klgates.com
K&L GATES LLP
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Eighth Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90067
Telephone: +1 310 552 5000
Facsimile: +1 310 552 5001

² The Court intended for the scope of the Special Master’s authority to resemble that of a magistrate judge, including the power to issue R&Rs. Magistrate judges, in addition to resolving discovery disputes, are vested with the authority to issue an R&R on a dispositive motion that may then be adopted by the district court. L.R. 72-1, 72-3. Similarly, the Court granted the Special Master authority to hear discovery disputes, as well as other motions referred to the Special Master by the Court. 1048 DE 100 § 2(a-b). Given the similarities between the areas of responsibility, the Special Master’s authority to hear “any other matters” referred by the Court should follow the same R&R procedure that is routinely implemented by magistrate judges. *See* L.R. 72-1, 72-3.

1 James A. Shimota (*admitted pro hac vice*)
2 jim.shimota@klgates.com
3 K&L GATES LLP
4 Suite 3300
5 70 W. Madison Street
6 Chicago, IL 60602
7 Tel.: (312) 372-1121
8 Facsimile: (312) 827-8000

9 Peter E. Soskin (SBN 280347)
10 peter.soskin@klgates.com
11 K&L GATES LLP
12 Four Embarcadero Center, Suite 1200
13 San Francisco, CA 94111
14 Telephone: (415) 882-8200
15 Facsimile: (415) 882-8220

16 *Attorneys for Plaintiff*
17 *Entropic Communications, LLC*
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CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

The undersigned, counsel of record for Plaintiff Entropic Communications, LLC, certifies that this brief contains 1,336 words, which complies with the word limit of L.R. 11-6.1.

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Christina Goodrich (SBN 261722)

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Los Angeles, CA 90067

Telephone: +1 310 552 5000

Facsimile: +1 310 552 5001

James A. Shimota (*admitted pro hac vice*)

jim.shimota@klgates.com

K&L GATES LLP

Suite 3300

70 W. Madison Street

Chicago, IL 60602

Tel.: (312) 372-1121

Facsimile: (312) 827-8000

Peter E. Soskin (SBN 280347)

peter.soskin@klgates.com

K&L GATES LLP

Four Embarcadero Center, Suite 1200

San Francisco, CA 94111

Telephone: (415) 882-8200

Facsimile: (415) 882-8220

Attorneys for Plaintiff

Entropic Communications, LLC